Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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"Crime Buster" Metcalf's Secret Boiler Room

Jack Metcalf snatched victory in Washington's second congressional district with the help of election-eve histrionics on the crime issue. Metcalf pounded his Democratic opponent, Harriet Spanel, with charges that she opposed the death penalty and was generally indulgent of the criminal element.

As the race went down to the wire, a Metcalf-financed boiler room operation – more politely known as "telemarketing" – was stoked into action. Under the guise of conducting a voter "poll," Metcalf's phone teams told prospective voters that whereas Metcalf was for the death penalty and against higher taxes, his Democratic opponent believed just the opposite. "Based on this," the phone operators asked, "who are you likely to vote for?" The phone teams began their "polling" on Nov. 4 and kept at it until 1 p.m. on election day, November 8. Then employees all adjourned for a "job well done" feast of pizza – under the vigilant gaze of guards at the Washington State Reformatory.

Metcalf, who was backed by the Christian Right and the gun owners' lobby, had enlisted prisoners at this medium-security prison in Monroe, some twenty miles northeast of Seattle, to assist him in his successful last-minute lunge for elected office.

We called Metcalf at his new quarters in the House of Representatives to ask him whether he saw any contradictions in using prison labor to obtain the democratic mandate, but the congressman did not make himself available for comment. Kevin McDermott, Metcalf's press secretary, informed **CounterPunch** that he had been instructed not to talk about the election. Asked why, he told our colleague, John McNeilly, that it would be a violation of federal law for him, as a congressional staff member, to discuss the election campaign!

Staffers at both the Federal Election Commission and the House Ethics Committee said they were unaware of any such legal restriction.

We're indebted to Paul Wright, a prisoner at Monroe who publishes *Prison Legal News*, for alerting us to the use of inmates at the Reformatory in the Metcalf race. As he wrote us: "The ironies are numerous: giving 'criminals' the names and phone numbers of the 'honest voters of the second district,' bashing prisoners while using them to get elected, sending jobs that can be done in the community off to prison, etc."

Wright tells us that the boiler room telemarketing operation run out of Monroe is the Washington Marketing Group, which is owned by Jim Patton. All of the phone operators are prisoners. They are paid minimum wage, from which the state withholds "room and board," state and federal taxes, fines, victim restitution fees, and any other deductions from their wages. The Group's usual clients include magazines drumming up subscriptions, insurance companies, the American Cancer Society and so forth.

The recipients of the calls do not know that they are being phoned by prisoners

■ IN THIS ISSUE ■

The Prison-Industrial Complex

- Jack Metcalf's Penal Pollsters
- Where Cons are Pros

Great Thinkers of the Right

- Meet Jeffrey Hart, Dartmouth's W.C. Fields
- Ahab's Rubber Whale

Staley Workers' Nemesis

- All Roads Lead to Dwayne Andreas

Plus:

- What's Good for GM... Is Good for GM: The C/K Pickup Cave-In

■

Paradise Lost

"Duke University in the past [before hiring Marxists and feminists] was regarded as a nice Southern finishing school and a good party place. Men wore jackets and ties. Women wore skirts."

– Jeffrey Hart, National Review, Dec. 17, 1990

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and such knowledge might not always increase their inclination to cooperate. Five years ago a *Seattle Times* columnist, Rick Anderson, said inmates telemarketing on behalf of an insurance company were taking down information on household security systems and other personal data, including credit card numbers. Questions included, "does the home have smoke alarms ... fire extinguishers ... dead-bolt locks ... protective devices?"

Programs for prison labor are a growth industry, existing in more than twenty states. Prison industries include, in addition to telemarketing, clothing and apparel, cattle grazing, and manufacturing of luxury limousines. Companies are allowed to set up shop inside prisons for little or no rent.

The issue of prison labor will loom larger and larger over the next generation as the U.S. gulag expands. From the prisoners' point of view almost anything is better than boredom and isolation.

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Organized labor sees the low-cost captive work force as another ruse of capital to undercut properly compensated work. In the early Nineties, AT&T used prisoners in several states as telemarketers, hired through a Utah firm, Unibase, that specializes in prisoner-contracting. AT&T was paying as little as $2 a day.

Businesses love prison labor for all the obvious reasons. The only downside is the unwelcome publicity

The Communication Workers of America confronted the company, complaining that the union had members all over the country laid off by AT&T, who were looking to telemarketing as an option. These workers were frustrated by stringent customer contact requirement tests which were apparently waived for prisoners. Faced with the union's protest, AT&T abandoned the practice.

Businesses love prison labor for all the obvious reasons. The only disadvantage is the factor that deterred AT&T: unwelcome publicity.

The state has two impulses, not entirely in harmony. On the one hand there is the desire for efficient punishment, most appallingly exhibited at Pelican Bay State Prison outside Crescent City in Northern California. Here, inmates can be in solitary for 22.5 hours a day, unable even to read in their cells.

This, with its high-tech trimmings, is essentially a latter day consequence of the efforts of Quaker do-gooders in Pennsylvania in the late 18th century, who felt a duty to reform offenders, said reform including introspection within the four walls of solitary confinement. The Walnut Street Penitentiary in Philadelphia prompted the erection in 1816 of the Audubon Penitentiary in New York, where every prisoner was kept continuously in isolation.

The reforming impulse that excited the breasts of the Quakers also aroused, shortly thereafter, the English liberal Jeremy Bentham. Over a quarter-century he sought to persuade the British government to adopt his scheme for the "Panopticon", where every prisoner could be maintained under continuous observation from a central tower.

The liberal panopticon, by dint of closed circuit television, is now in operation at Pelican Bay and other modern facilities. Prisoners driven mad by such conditions are subdued either by thorazine and other drugs, or by violence from the guards.

The state's other interest, shared by business, is nurturing the newly emerging prison-industrial complex, or what former Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger called "factories with fences." Conservatives have no interest in reform, but they like the idea of cheap workers. The state places at the disposal of its corporate sector a work force with no rights.

The cyclical shift is plain enough. Take the high-wage, unionized work force of American capitalism at its Fifties apogee, pauperize it, criminalize it, imprison it, and put it to work. These are the factories of the future, with perhaps the frill pioneered at Monroe, of prisoners laboring for politicians seeking office by being tough on crime.

Incidentally, we did reach Metcalf's campaign co-chair, Della Newman, who first attained the public eye during her season as U.S. ambassador to New Zealand. She had gained this post by the traditional expedient of colossal campaign contributions, in this case to George Bush's 1988 presidential run. As ambassador she angered New Zealanders with her harsh denunciations of their refusal to let nuclear weapons-laden ships into their ports.

Newman confirmed the Metcalf campaign's use of the Washington Marketing Group, but denied knowing that the company used prison labor. She conceded that if the story were true, "it raises a significant question" about Metcalf's public stance on crime. ■

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Green Fingers: Decatur's Horatio Alger

One of the lushest money trails in politics stretches from Washington, D.C. to Decatur, Illinois, where for the second Christmas in a row the 760 workers of the A.E. Staley corn-processing company were locked out of their jobs. A few thousand more Decaturites — workers from Caterpillar and Firestone — are on strike, meaning that this winter about one-quarter of the town's working class has an intimate or neighbor on strike or locked out.

The details of these labor conflicts are intricate but at bottom all involve issues of control: arbitrarily imposed 12-hour shifts without overtime, two-tier pay and benefit systems, non-union subcontracting, eviscerated health and safety protections.

In Decatur it's the usual story of local authorities hopping to the corporate dictat. Police have beaten, gassed and spied on workers. City officials have tumbled over themselves to sue the tiny United Paperworkers local for having a picket shelter outside the Staley plant gate and harassed its members for picnicking in a public park next to the home of the company vice president.

Ask people when things really got nasty in this old union town and it's not long before the name Dwayne Andreas comes up. Andreas is the top man at Archer-Daniels-Midland, the agribusiness empire that dominates the physical landscape of Decatur and bulks mightily in the political landscape of Washington.

Back in 1982, ADM pioneered the use of "rat contractors," provoking a strike that the company ultimately broke and creating an atmosphere that saw open season on union labor in general. ADM also owns about eight percent of Tate & Lyle, Staley's parent company, so it benefits directly from the profits now generated by scab labor there.

Andreas has put up some $270,000 in soft money contributions since Clinton's 1992 coronation as Democratic candidate

Once known as "the kingpin of GOP fund raising," Andreas changed trains in 1992 when it looked as if Clinton might capture the presidency. Since then, he has been one of the Democrats' most faithful backers, putting up some $270,000 in soft money contributions in the first twenty-one months following Clinton's coronation as the Democratic candidate.

In return for his public support of the President's 1993 budget plan, Andreas got ethanol (the "alternative" corn-based fuel of which ADM is the country's largest producer) exempted from Clinton's BTU tax proposal, an exemption that opened the door to so many other challenges that ultimately the entire proposal was scuttled. Clinton also maintained a Bush-era tax subsidy for ethanol which will cost the government an estimated $3.4 billion by the year 2000.

But Clinton's biggest gift, granted one week after Andreas co-chaired a fund-raising dinner that netted the Democrats $2.5 million in June of last year, was the EPA's ruling that by 1996 one-tenth of all gasoline sold in the United States must contain ethanol. John McMillan, a Prudential Securities analyst in New York, figures that ADM, producing 70 percent of the country's ethanol, stands to gain some $100 million a year as a result of this environmentally dubious decision.

Democratic big-dealers were quick to say there was no *quid pro quo*. "He's just a giver," Robert Strauss, another co-chair of the dinner and an ADM board member, said of his good friend Dwayne, adding that Andreas is also Mother Theresa's largest donor.

The notion of Andreas the Munificent has such currency that last year the Horatio Alger Association honored him for his devotion "to caring for and feeding the poor around the globe." The Association was possibly unaware that in 1978, ADM

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was found guilty of fixing prices on foodstuffs sold to the Food for Peace program.

When the Staley workers heard that Andreas would be given the Alger Award they did a little digging and found that Horatio Alger was scarcely the model for two-fisted entrepreneurism touted by mythmakers of capital down the decades. In fact, he was a rather pathetic hack.

The author of such sentimental children's stories as "Ragged Dick" — the tale of a street urchin who makes a quick passage from illiterate bootblack to virtuous member of " 'spectable" society — lived mainly in a series of rooming houses in New York. Scorned by critics during much of his lifetime as either maudlin or sensational, Alger had what his biographer, Gary Scharnhorst, calls a "low-trajectory career." The two publishers who supported him early and long eventually went broke, and the magazine that was home during his most prolific phase in the late nineteenth century steadily lost circulation the more he wrote for it. His attempts at writing fiction for adults failed.

Other features of Alger's biography also run athwart the corporate bio. Before the Reverend Alger began his literary career, one of his parishioners wrote this account to a friend in 1866: "On the Sabbath after services, [a boy] called at his room to leave a book...[Alger] bolted his door and then committed this unnatural crime, with the boy's poor sister waiting in the carriage, in the cold, [during] this diabolical transaction."

Alger admitted to a committee of inquiry that he had been "imprudent," considered his connection with the Unitarian Society dissolved, and hastily left town on the next train.

In fact, it's ironic that Horatio Alger was ever transformed into a propagandist for unbounded capitalism. The image was entirely at odds with his actual sympathies. Alger disdained the captains of industry and even favored unionization. ■

— JoAnn Wypijewski

Tales of Two Hats: GM's Man

After chest-pounding pledges to recall General Motors's C/K pickup trucks, which have an unfortunate tendency to burst into flames after collisions, the Transportation Department abruptly changed course last month and merely required GM to pay $51 million over five years toward funding safety programs. That was a tiny price to pay for a defect which resulted in the deaths of over 600 people. The decision, announced by Transportation Secretary Federico Peña, also annulled three days of public hearings, scheduled for late December and viewed with great trepidation by GM executives.

Possibly shedding light on Peña's capitulation is the fact that Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Rogovin, the man who brokered the deal between the government and the company, owns thousands of dollars worth of GM stock. *Corporate Crime Reporter*, a Washington publication, learned of this gross conflict of interest after obtaining Rogovin's federal disclosure statement.

Rogovin's last employer before joining the government was O'Melveny & Myers, a law firm that does sizeable work for GM and other auto makers. That Rogovin maintains his retirement fund with O'Melveny & Myers indicates that he may have plans to return to the law firm following his current stint as public servant.

Last January, Rogovin asked for a waiver from ethics laws in order to participate in the case. No doubt confident that he would construct a Chinese Wall around his relationship with GM, the Justice Department kindly approved the request.

The Center for Auto Safety asked to see Rogovin's petition for a waiver, but it was turned down by the Justice Department. The Center was told that the petition contained privileged attorney-client information. ■

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(Hart, continued from back page)

anyone who thought things were rotten in Chile, "Well, he ought to come here."

According to Hart, left-wingers have destroyed the academies by imposing multiculturalism — "a program of Third World supremacy [which has spread] through the universities like a noxious gas." Furthermore, the "egalitarianism" of the 1960s has undermined academic standards, with servile professors doling out A's to the undeserving.

Dartmouth students, so our informants recall, graded Hart himself as one of the least exigent professors on campus. One student once informed the English Department that course lectures by this educational crusader were comprised mostly of sports anecdotes, and complained that she had not enrolled in a course on the literature of the 1920s "to learn Babe Ruth's batting average."

Accustomed to the perfunctory A from Easy Jeff, one group rebelled upon learning that Hart would employ a strict grader for an important exam. The uproar was such that university deans asked the Committee of Curriculum to reverse its own rule of forbidding pass/fail grading for major courses, thereby allowing students who didn't earn an A to escape with their honor intact.

Hart's classroom behavior was also eccentric. Sources who witnessed him in action said Hart frequently stumbled into class, struggled to the stage and then merely rambled in disoriented fashion, often launching into incoherent diatribes against Lionel Trilling. "I can't watch W.C. Fields movies any more," says one person. "It's too painfully reminiscent of Jeff."

Hart and the *Review* regularly attacked Dartmouth professors, their targets habitually being women or minorities whom they deemed too "PC." William Cole, a respected black professor of jazz, resigned in 1990 after being harassed by *Review* staffers for seven years. Sally Sedgwick, a philosophy professor, was denounced by the Hart clique as a radical feminist and symbol of the declining standards of scholarship in American universities. Her real crime was accusing a *Dartmouth Review* editor, Andrew Baker, of inadequately citing sources in a paper for one of her classes, a finding confirmed by a committee which reviewed the case.

These campaigns against campus figures often reached the national level, when Hart would recruit his friend William Buckley to take up the cause. Buckley was also generous when reviewing *When the Going Was Good!*, the Dartmouth professor's book on the Fifties. "Other decades, unaddressed by him, weep in envy," Buckley wrote loyally.

One student complained that she had not enrolled in Hart's course on the literature of the 1920s "to learn Babe Ruth's batting average"

(Other reviewers were less charitable. Prudence Crowther called *When the Going Was Good!* "a matchlessly dull book" ridden with "enervated, repetitive and hackneyed prose." As evidence of the latter, she pointed to one paragraph early in the book in which waves were "lashing," "crashing," "whipping" and "punishing" the Dover cliffs, and Hart's description of the decade's campus hijinks as part of "the exuberant froth on the surface of the heaving sea of American society during the Fifties.")

Hart devoted much time to protecting the besieged Dartmouth male, especially his bathroom privileges. When a college health committee recommended designating a men's room in the English Department a women's room, Hart protested that the move would give women, a minority in the department, a majority of bathroom stalls.

"Absolutely not," Hart wrote to the committee. "Is it maintained that [women] 'go' more frequently? I want to see the empirical data." In another memo he argued that the plan "appears to be in clear violation of the sex-discrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1965." The end result was that Dartmouth was forced to spend thousands of dollars to build a new women's room.

Like dozens of right-wingers who whine about their views being excluded by the "liberal media," Hart has a nationally syndicated column. He brings to his journalistic endeavors the same erratic standards he exhibited in academia.

In 1991, Hart visited Grand Rapids, Michigan, and wrote a column about a supposedly grotesque "fish kill" he witnessed during his stay. Locals, he claimed, had waded into a river and trapped thousands of tiny blue fish. The maltreated fry were then tossed ashore amid cheers from a crowd. Decrying the small town mentality of the mob, Hart denounced the "cowardly spectacle" conducted by Grand Rapids residents.

Hart had actually witnessed a fundraiser for the Grand Rapids Public Museum and the fish were tiny blue-and-pink rubber whales. Hart, who observed the "fish kill" from the window of a riverside restaurant in what seems to have been a fuddled state, somehow missed clowns, jugglers, a band and other abundant evidence that should have disclosed to him the event's true nature.

Informed of his error, Hart refused to issue a retraction. Instead, he denounced Gerald Ford's home town anew in a second column. "The animals of the water, earth and air have their own lives," he wrote, saying that whale event sent "precisely the wrong message" to town residents. "Grow up Grand Rapids," Hart added. "Try holding a bike race next year."

Dartmouth's dirty secret is that Hart flourished there because many liberal members of the faculty were complicit with Hart, and in some cases even offered him succor. A faction of the junior faculty wanted to censure Hart for his role in the attack on jazz professor Cole, but were opposed by a majority of the English department. One faculty member hastened to Hart's defense, saying campus radicals were trying to close down culture by limiting freedom of expression. As one Dartmouth professor says, "Liberals here don't mind having the left policed, no matter what they say in private about Hart and the *Review*." ■

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Cult Hero of the Right

No Home Town Hero

Retired professor of English at Dartmouth, former Nixon and Reagan speechwriter, *National Review* senior editor and syndicated columnist, Jeffrey Hart crusades for "higher standards" in academia. The Sixties generation has turned "the universities into an ideological prison," Hart says. He calls for a return to basics: more Plato and Shakespeare, less African-American Studies and Women's Studies.

One of **CounterPunch**'s editors made a year-end visit to Hanover, New Hampshire, where Dartmouth is located, and heard some interesting testimony about Hart's own academic standards. The professor – who bears a noticeable resemblance to Anthony Hopkins' Hannibal Lecter, the serial killer of *Silence of the Lambs* – is regarded by many at Dartmouth as something of a buffoon. Students deemed him to be so undemanding that they called him "Easy Jeff."

Matthew Rowlinson, an English professor at Dartmouth, says of Hart, "He had no stature in the professional academy. His books were published by conservative presses and were at best popular history." Another member of the Dartmouth faculty was equally dismissive: "Jeffrey was no teacher. His idea of an intellectual is someone who knows that Plato was Greek."

Conservatives like Hart have stepped up their campaign against the university because they see academia as the last remaining outpost of the U.S. left. As Richard Rorty, a professor of humanities at the University of Virginia, wrote last October in the *London Review of Books*, "A large portion of the American middle class has been made to believe that the universities are under the control of a 'political correctness' police. This false belief has made it easier for [the right] to dismiss their opponents as far-out, self-intoxicated radicals – out of touch with the sound common sense of mainstream America."

In the normal course of events, the activities of a professor at Dartmouth would be of scant interest beyond the limits of the campus. But through the megaphone of the *Wall Street Journal*, the *National Review*, and his other publicists, Hart has been a prominent player in fomenting the great "PC" hysteria.

Hart, who's now working on a book about education in the Nineties, retired from Dartmouth in 1993. He was a senior advisor to the *Dartmouth Review*, a right-wing off-campus publication which gets cash by the sackful from conservative sources, including William Simon, the Wall Street millionaire and former treasury secretary; George Champion, the former chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank and Dartmouth alumnus from 1926; and also from the Olin Foundation.

The *Review* gained notoriety for stunts such as running a caricature of Dartmouth President James Freedman, who's Jewish, as Adolf Hitler, and holding a lobster and champagne lunch on the day that students raised money to combat hunger. Such frat boy antics helped ensure lucrative post-Dartmouth employ for *Review* staffers. These include Dinesh D'Souza, a former student of Hart's who worked for the Reagan administration and authored *Illiberal Education*, Kevin Pritchett, the black neo-conservative who worked for *The Wall Street Journal*, and Hart's son, Ben Hart, a slow-witted lad who wrote *Poisoned Ivy*, a puerile tale of woe about his school years.

Hart criticizes "PC" and calls for campus "free speech". His own political views run toward fascism. Hart's Dartmouth office was adorned with a picture of himself exchanging pleasantries with Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, a man he once defended in an article titled, "A Peaceful Day in Chile". Hart described a series of pleasant events he had witnessed during a visit to that country – a soccer match, a band concert and, most glowingly evoked, the fact that Santiago's population "includes a strikingly large proportion of beautiful women" clad in blue jeans "so tight they should require a physician's prescription to buy a pair." For Hart this was evidence enough that

(Continued on preceding page)

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